

REFLECTION ON THE LIFE OF SISTER MARIE VERONICA GOGOLIN

April 16, 1937–January 29, 2015



On January 29, 2015, Sister Marie Veronica Gogolin had the most important test of her life. Her Divine Spouse asked her, “What did you do with what I gave you? What did you do with your life . . . all the gifts, talents, opportunities, energy, relationships, and resources that I gave you?”

Agnes Geraldine Gogolin was born to Leo and Regina Gogolin. She had a sister Regina and a brother Leo.

At the time of her First Communion, when she was dressed in a white dress and veil, she told her mother that she should get a good look at it because she would not be wearing a white dress and veil again since she was going to become a Sister of Charity. She always said it like it was.

Agnes entered the Sisters of Charity September 8, 1955. Sister Agnes, the postulant, was called to share her gifts with 60-some third graders at Saint Jerome School in Charleroi. Sister Ellenita was her teacher guide. This was the beginning of her passion for teaching little children. Passion is what gets one out of bed in the morning. It is what one loves doing with one’s life. It is passion that fires us with energy.

Her years of teaching took her to Greensburg, Pittsburgh, Phoenix, Tucson, and the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. She said the most rewarding aspect of her ministry was watching the children light up when they understood a concept. She loved learning and took numerous classes to improve her teaching skills—anything that would help the children. She also took many religious classes, taking advantage of all the opportunities presented to her.

She was a private person. The day after she came home from the hospital, I commented that I didn’t even know that she had been in the hospital. She replied that she liked to go incognito. No one needed to know. A quote from Proverbs says it best: “A pretentious, showy life is an empty life, a plain and simple life is a full life.”

Often when we are working on one thing, God is doing something else. He doesn't always show us what he is doing in our lives. We are all doers. We think we have to be doing something, but a time comes when we have to realize that if we can't get it all done, it means we're trying to do more that God ever intended for us.

Physical suffering and a deep concern about what others thought began to sap her energy. She spent hours doing lesson plans. I read once that it is the fire of suffering that brings the gold of godliness. The time came for Sister Marie Veronica to come home to Caritas Christi. The Holy Spirit that filled her with a passion for children filled her with a final desire for the rest of her journey.

She loved Caritas Christi. She loved the sisters who live here and being able to do her small bit. Guiding her throughout these past 59 years has been Mother Seton's admonishment, "Be children of the Church." Marie believed that this is why she became a Sister of Charity.

To paraphrase Isaiah: The Lord gives perfect peace to those who keep their purpose firm and put their trust in Him.

Funeral Liturgy Reflection
Sister Mary Victor Powers
February 2, 2015